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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 000654

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/03/2015

TAGS: OPDC PREL AU FR SY

SUBJECT: ASSAD VISIT TO VIENNA POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

REF: A. (A) STATE 36905

1B. (B) VIENNA 572

Classified By: Ambassador W.L. Lyons Brown. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Markus Lutterotti, Diplomatic Advisor to President Fischer, told the Ambassador March 3 that Bashar al-Assad's trip has been postponed indefinitely. Lutterotti said that Assad had called Fischer March 2 to postpone the trip (originally planned for March 15) & in view of the present situation.⁸ Lutterotti would not be drawn into commenting on how long the postponement would last, nor would he say which party had instigated the postponement. The Ambassador noted that the news of the postponement came through just as he and French Ambassador Viaux were preparing to make an urgent and tough demarche to Foreign Minister Plassnik. Telling Lutterotti that the prospect of an Assad visit had surprised and dismayed the USG at the highest levels in Washington, the Ambassador said we hoped the visit would not be reconstituted.

12. (C) (Note: In a subsequent discussion with French Ambassador Viaux, the Ambassador was informed that the French ambassador in Damascus has confirmed that the trip is off. End note.)

13. (C) Comment: While the Assad visit postponement vitiates the immediate need for a demarche to Plassnik, the Ambassador will discuss the issue with MFA Secretary General Kyrle (en route to Paris today to meet with his French counterpart) to ensure that the foreign ministry as well as the president's office understands the level of U.S. concern regarding such visits. End Comment.

Brown